



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, March 9, 2004
Contact: Lena Dibble
Tobacco Control Program
(801) 538-6917

Local Youth Join National Campaign to Slash Tobacco Use in Children's Films

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Phoenix Alliance Youth and the Utah Department of Health want Walt Disney studios to eliminate tobacco use in its films directed toward children. On national "Call to Action Day," Tuesday, March 9, Utah's teen anti-tobacco advocacy group will join other youth across the nation by faxing letters and mailing petitions to Disney throughout the day in order to call attention to this important issue. The youth have also created a "Black Lung Award" which they will mail to Disney for its promotion of tobacco in their films.

"Disney has earned this award by featuring smoking in 88 percent of their PG-13-rated movies," said Bre Deby, Phoenix Alliance coordinator. "It's estimated that 1,070 children start smoking each day in the U.S. as a result of scenes glamorizing tobacco in movies, according to the American Lung Association's Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down! Report!"

On March 9 Utah youth will join representatives from 18 states in launching a national campaign to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use in Hollywood. Advocates will be armed with results from a five-year study co-authored by Stanton Glantz, PhD, director of the University of California-San Francisco Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education. The study shows a high content of tobacco use in children's movies since 1999. Advocates will push for tobacco use to be on the list of standards that earn a film an "R" rating.

"Movies with smoking are a serious health threat to children," said Lena Dibble, media liaison for the Utah Department of Health's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. "An R-rating on tobacco use would cut the U.S. problem in half and save more lives than we now lose to criminal violence, drunk driving and HIV/AIDS combined."

Local Youth Join National Campaign to Slash Tobacco Use in Children's Films

A survey of 776 U.S. movies in theaters between 1999 and the end of 2003 tied on-screen tobacco content and the tobacco impressions they generate to specific Hollywood studios. The report points to three studios that have the highest tobacco content in their movies:

- Time Warner (Warner Bros, New Line, etc.) accounts for a quarter of all tobacco impressions on teen moviegoers.
- Sony (Columbia, Revolution, etc.) consistently ranks among the top three cinematic promoters of teen smoking.
- Walt Disney includes smoking in 88 percent of their PG-13 movies.

The survey found that teenage moviegoers experienced 6.5 billion tobacco impressions - almost half in movies rated G, PG and PG-13. Children 6-11 encountered big screen tobacco incidents 1.7 billion times over the five years, more than half of them in movies rated PG-13.

"In the past five years, almost 90 percent of studios' R-rated movies, 80 percent of their PG-13 movies, and 50 percent of G and PG-rated movies included smoking," said survey co-author Stanton Glantz, PhD. "At least half of all the tobacco impressions made by movies in theaters come from youth-rated films. And that doesn't even count what happens on video."

Published research indicates that exposure to Hollywood's smoking movies recruits more than half of all new, young smokers.

"New teen smokers continue to replace adults who quit or die," said Courtney Moffet, Phoenix Alliance youth leader. "We know that Hollywood movies are at least half the reason. The single smartest thing any parent can do is to help get smoking out of kid-rated movies."

An R-rating for on-screen smoking is endorsed by leading health organizations including the American Medical Association, World Health Organization (WHO), and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

#

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.